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NORTH WITCHFORD RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health for the Year, 1952,

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES and GENTLEMEN,

I beg to present to you my report for the year 1952 on the health conditions of your district during that period.

I also present the Sanitary Inspector's report.

I have the honour to be, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

CECIL THOMAS,

Medical Officer of Health.

GENERAL PROVISIONS FOR HEALTH SERVICES

(1) Public Health Officers.

Medical Officer of Health — CECIL THOMAS, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P.

Sanitary Inspector — JOHN METCALFE, M.R.San.I.

(2) Nursing in the Home.

The entire district has the services of Trained Nurses under the control of the Local Authority.

(3) Hospital.

Most patients are now treated at Doddington Hospital.

(4) Ambulance Facilities.

These are controlled by the County Council.

(5) Child Welfare.

Clinics are held at Doddington and Manea.

Social Conditions.

The bulk of the adult population is engaged in agricultural work and there are a considerable number of small holdings under the control of the Isle of Ely County Council. Agricultural work also provides seasonal employment for many of the female adult population.

General Statistics.

| | |
|--|---------|
| Area (acres) | 26,088 |
| Population (estimated mid year by Registrar General) | 4,870 |
| Number of inhabited houses | 1,579 |
| Rateable Value | £13,706 |
| Sum represented by a penny rate | £57 |

Vital Statistics.

Table 1. Live Births:

| | M. | F. | Total. |
|--------------|----|----|--------|
| Legitimate | 30 | 30 | 60 |
| Illegitimate | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| | — | — | — |
| | 32 | 31 | 63 |

The birth rate is 12.93 per 1,000 population, which is below the birth rate for England and Wales at 15.3 per 1,000. The birth rate for the District in 1951 (84 births) was 16.72 compared with that of England and Wales at 15.8.

Table 2. Still Births:

There were no still births in the District during 1952.

Table 3. Infantile Mortality:

There were no deaths of infants in the District under the age of 4 weeks or under one year.

Table 4. Deaths in Area and Causes:

| | M. | F. | Total. |
|--------------------------------------|----|----|--------|
| Cancer | 5 | 2 | 7 |
| Leukaemia | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Diabetes | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Vascular lesions of nervous system | 5 | 5 | 10 |
| Coronary diseases | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Other Heart Diseases | 5 | 4 | 9 |
| Other Circulatory Diseases | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Bronchitis | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Ulcer of Stomach and duodenum | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Other Defined and Ill-defined Causes | 6 | 2 | 8 |
| Accidents | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Non Pulmonary Tuberculosis | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | 27 | 20 | 47 |

The death rate for 1952 was 9.65 per 1,000 population compared with 11.3 for England and Wales. For 1951 the District death rate (49 deaths) was 9.75 per 1,000 population as against 12.5 for England and Wales.

Notifiable Infectious Diseases.

| Disease. | Total Notified. |
|---------------|-----------------|
| Pneumonia | 7 |
| Scarlet Fever | 7 |
| Poliomyelitis | 2 |
| Measles | 57 |
| Meningitis | 2 |
| Erysipelas | 1 |
| | 76 |

Food Poisoning Outbreaks.

There were no notified outbreaks of food poisoning during 1952.

NORTH WITCHFORD
RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

Sanitary Inspector's Report for the Year, 1952.

Sanitary Inspection of the Area.

The following are the numbers of visits and inspections carried out during 1952:

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Water Supply | 25 |
| Drainage | 79 |
| Fried Fish Shops | 36 |
| Vans and Sheds | 32 |
| Factories | 16 |
| Bakehouses | 13 |
| Sanitary Accommodation | 48 |
| Refuse Collection | 13 |
| Refuse Dumps | 6 |
| Rats and Mice | 19 |
| Refuse Accumulations | 5 |
| Miscellaneous Sanitary Visits | 49 |
| Nightsoil Disposal | 8 |
| Sewers and Sewage Disposal Works | 99 |
| Dykes | 20 |
| Building Byelaws | 362 |
| Drain and sewer tests | 94 |
| Piggeries | 15 |
| Petroleum Installations | 13 |

Housing.

Under Public Health Acts.

| | |
|--|-----|
| No. of houses inspected (including Council houses) | 213 |
| No. of visits paid to above houses | 365 |

Under Housing Acts.

| | |
|---|-----|
| No. of houses inspected | 17 |
| No. of visits paid to above houses | 25 |
| Miscellaneous Housing Visits | 167 |
| Visits to houses re Infectious Diseases | 9 |
| Visits to houses to carry out disinfection against vermin | 2 |

Meat and Food Inspection.

| | |
|--|----|
| Meat Inspection Visits for emergency slaughter | 10 |
| Butchers' shops | 9 |
| Grocers' Shops | 26 |
| Ice Cream Premises (retail) | 8 |
| Street Vendors | 5 |

Interviews and Meetings attended 1,246

Notices Served.

| | |
|--|-----|
| No. of informal notices served | 35 |
| No. of above complied with | 22 |
| No. of above in hand at close of year | 7 |
| House numbering notices served | 209 |
| Statutory Notices served (Demolition Orders) | 5 |

Housing.

Progress during the year in the erection of new Council houses was again very slow, hampered to some extent by shortage of certain materials. Only 4 houses were handed over for occupation, bringing the total of post war Council houses up to 70, plus 15 pre-fabricated bungalows. Towards the end of the year progress was speeded up and there were 12 houses and six bungalows under construction at the close of the year.

Private enterprise, on the other hand, made a useful contribution to post war housing by the erection of 10 new dwellings and one conversion, and there were 6 more dwellings under construction at the end of 1952. In addition there were two bungalows in course of erection by County Council Small Holding Departments.

No applications were received for Improvement Grants under Section 20 of the Housing Act, 1949, or applications for grants under Section 3 of the Housing and Financial Provisions Act, 1938.

There are numerous sub standard houses in the District, many of which should be demolished, but the task of re-housing the occupants is a lengthy procedure

with the present slow rate of building new dwellings. Repair and reconditioning of existing rented houses is not an economic proposition in the majority of cases whilst rents remain controlled at pre-war levels, and therefore it is not possible to report much improvement in the privately owned housing accommodation.

A considerable amount of time is taken up with dealing with complaints and repairs arising at Council houses.

Representation was made in respect of six dwellings as being unfit for human habitation under Section II of the Housing Act, 1936, and Demolition Orders were made in 5 cases, the remaining one being deferred. Eleven houses were repaired as a result of informal action. One Order Determining a Closing Order was issued in respect of premises at Benwick which had been reconditioned satisfactorily.

Civil Building Control.

During the year 10 building licences to the value of £2,685 were issued on behalf of the Ministry of Works authorising repairs and additions to existing dwellings. Fourteen licences were issued for new dwelling houses. Sixty three plans were deposited with the Council under the Building Bylaws, all of which were approved. 362 inspections were made of buildings in course of erection and in connection with the Building Bylaws.

Water Supply.

The following is the information requested by the Ministry of Health:—

(i) In those parts of the parishes of Doddington and Wimblington served by the recently formed Wisbech and District Water Board, the water supply has been adequate in quantity and there have been no complaints as to quality.

So far as the parish of Manea is concerned, the renewal of a section of the supply main (1,200 yards of 4in. main) and the installation of booster equipment at Wimblington has enabled much more satisfactory supplies to be afforded to Manea, which has for many years suffered severe shortages. There is, however, still room for improvement.

Benwick village is still without a piped supply, as also are Welches Dam and Stonea. These, together with other outlying houses and farmsteads have to rely on rainwater and river water for drinking and domestic purposes, augmented by mains water carted from the nearest point. There are a few springs and wells used for drinking purposes, but generally speaking underground water is not palatable. During the period of drought which occurred in the month of July, 1952, it was necessary to cart mains water to Benwick and Stonea, the total amount conveyed being 15,000 and 1,000 gallons respectively, carting taking place on 14 occasions to Benwick and once to Stonea.

(ii) No independent sampling of the piped supply is carried out by the Council.

(iii) No action was necessary in respect of any contamination.

(iv) The local supply of water is not plumbo-solvent.

(v) Proportion of dwelling houses supplied from public mains:

| Parish | Direct to Houses | By standpipe |
|-------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Wimblington | 85% | 2½% |
| Doddington | 65% | 2% |
| Manea | 80% | 9% |
| Welches Dam | Nil | Nil |
| Benwick | Nil | Nil |

Work on the proposed water main to Benwick, in respect of which the Council entered into a guarantee agreement with the Wisbech and District Water Board during the previous year, had not commenced by the end of the year owing to the necessary pipes not being available.

Apart from the 1,200 yards of 4in. main replaced en route to Manea, the only other new work comprised 24 yards of 2in. and 114 yards of 3in. water mains laid at Council Housing Estates during the year under review.

Two samples of water were taken for examination from private sources, viz: a well at Doddington Hospital and a land spring in the District, and the report on both was favourable.

Drainage and Sewerage.

Certain portions of the built up areas of Doddington, Wimblington and Manea are served by old combined storm water and foul sewers, all of which discharge into obsolete works or open dykes. The standard of effluent discharged is very poor and from time to time complaints are made that sewage matter is being deposited in open dykes. With the present curtailment in capital expenditure, there is little likelihood of any new main drainage schemes materialising for many years.

Apart from ordinary maintenance work of cleansing sewage dykes and emptying settlement tanks and catchpits at various outfalls with the assistance of the Contractors' cesspool emptier, no works of extension or reconstruction were undertaken in the year to the public sewers. The sewage outfall dyke at Curf Fen, Doddington, was thoroughly cleansed.

Considerable progress was made with the construction of surface water and foul sewers (separate systems) on the housing estates at Doddington and Wimblington, the former being completed during the year.

Drainage disposal to such other houses as are provided with drainage systems is, in the main, by use of septic tanks, cesspools and soakwells, which function with varying degrees of success. A large number of houses, particularly in Manea and Benwick, are provided with pail closets, and many other properties have vault closets.

Public Cleansing.

Night soil is still collected by contractors, composted with straw and utilised on arable land. The contractors provide for 3 collections of closet pails per fortnight and some 670 closets are dealt with. This collection used to be done during the hours of darkness, but in recent years with the shortage of labour it has been the practice in most portions of the area (in common with other districts) to make collections in the day time and it has become an unpleasant necessity to have vehicles collecting pail contents standing and operating in the streets in broad daylight. Only by adequate and expensive water borne sewerage systems draining to properly designed sewage disposal works can this state of affairs be satisfactorily remedied.

Cesspools and vaults are emptied upon request by occupiers by one of the Contractors, who uses a cesspool emptier for this purpose. The contents are either discharged on to arable land or disposed at the night soil tipping points.

Tins and indestructible household refuse are collected at monthly intervals by contract, employing the kerbside method. Disposal is effected in dis-used gravel pits, where the refuse is periodically covered with soil specially carted to the site. Unfortunately these sites are open to all-comers and a certain amount of indiscriminate tipping occurs, which makes it difficult and expensive to cover the entire tipping face with soil. The refuse contractors carried out their duties very satisfactorily during the year under review.

Milk Supply.

The bulk of the milk supply is now distributed by two firms operating from dairies situated outside the District. Such milk is either Tuberculin Tested or Pasteurised.

The following licences were issued during the year under the Milk (Special Designations) Regulations, 1949:—

| | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|---|
| Supplementary Licences: | Pasteurised | 2 |
| | Tuberculin Tested | 2 |
| | Tuberculin Tested Milk | |
| | (Pasteurised) | 1 |
| | Sterilised | 1 |

Three samples of Pasteurised milk, one of Tuberculin Tested and one of Sterilised milk were taken in the course of delivery for examination at the Public Health Laboratory, Cambridge, and all were satisfactory.

Meat and Other Food Inspection.

None of the seven slaughterhouses existing in the District has been licensed under Section 57 of the Food and Drugs Act, 1938. Home killed meat supplied to this area is slaughtered in the adjoining Urban District of March, where it is inspected at the time of slaughter. 17 pigs (emergency slaughter) were inspected at various premises in the area and passed as fit for human consumption. 125½ lbs. of home killed beef were condemned in butchers' shops as being "heated".

Other foodstuffs inspected and voluntarily surrendered were:—

| | | | |
|---------------------|---------|--------------------|---------|
| Braised Pork Hearts | 4½ lbs. | Tinned Salmon | 15½ oz. |
| Evaporated Milk | 2 tins | Ham and Veal | 4 lbs. |
| Jellied Veal | 2 lbs. | Pork Luncheon Meat | 4 lbs. |
| Luncheon Meat | 4 lbs. | | |

Ice Cream.

No Ice Cream is manufactured in the area. One additional shop was registered under Section 14 of the Food and Drugs Act, 1938, for the sale and storage of ice cream, the total number of premises now in use for sale of ice cream being 11. Seven samples of ice cream were taken and submitted for examination at the Public Health Laboratory, these being placed in the undermentioned categories:—

| | | |
|---------|---|-----------|
| Grade 1 | — | 6 Samples |
| Grade 4 | — | 1 Sample |

Byelaws for Handling Food.

Byelaws for handling of food (as per model issued by the Ministry of Food) were adopted under Section 15 of the Food and Drugs Act, 1938, and came into force on the 7th of April, 1952.

Owing to pressure of other duties it has not been possible to devote very much time to the enforcement of these byelaws.

Moveable Dwellings.

There are no large caravan sites in the area. Eight licences were issued under Section 269 of the Public Health Act, 1936, authorising the use of caravans for a limited period on individual sites. One prosecution was made under Section 269 and the offender was fined, unfortunately without the desired effect of securing the removal of the caravans.

Rodent Control.

Comparatively few complaints have been received regarding infestation generally, and these have all been dealt with. The various sewage dykes and refuse tips are treated regularly by the Council's employee. The Pest Department of the Isle of Ely County Agricultural Executive Committee carry out a considerable amount of rat destruction in the area, having contracts for the treatment of over 100 premises.

Factories Acts.

During the year 29 inspections were made to Factories and Bakehouses. Defects or want of cleanliness were found and remedied at seven premises. There are no outworkers employed.

J. METCALFE,

Sanitary Inspector.

8th September, 1953.

